

## ***HOLY DESIRE, LEV.18***

Ancient Access Codes #5

◆**Intro:** There is a special, far away land called Krumble, where every boy and girl has a special cookie, given to them by the King. Oh there are other cookies, but this cookie from the King is magical, and so well made that it never spoils, or dries out. The King has instructed all the boys and girls, men and women of Krumble to save their cookie for just the one, right partner to someday share it with. When they find that one, right person, – for a boy it will be a girl and for a girl it will be a boy– if they are willing to be BFFs, they can exchange cookies and eat them. The thing is, if you obey the King’s command, first promising to be BFFs, no matter how much you eat of the cookies, they will never get any smaller, and with the passing of time they will taste even sweeter than before.

◆Of course many boys and girls in Krumble disagreed with the King. “What if I want to share my cookie with all the girls I think are pretty?” asked one boy. “Oh, I’ve already tried that, said another, “and boy those cookies are awesome. I’m thinking of trading parts of mine with another girl sometime soon.” There was only one problem. For everyone who didn’t follow the Kings command, and exchanged cookies before they promised to be BFFs, their cookies were like any ordinary cookie, when you ate them, they got smaller, until they disappeared. It didn’t make any sense. They were supposed to be forever cookies!

◆Well, soon, when their magic cookies had lost their power, people started taking other people’s magic cookies. Sometimes

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after being real nice, and sharing their lunches together they would just suddenly trade cookies and start eating them. Sometimes they would sell their cookies. Sometimes stronger kids would surround a smaller kid and just take their cookie by force. But they all found the same thing: those cookies never magically grew back, never lasted. They eventually got eaten up! Some folks even started to hate the very idea of cookies!

◆Others took pictures of all the best looking cookies from all over the land and put them in cookie books, or on the internet so people could stare at them, and feel all dreamy about the flavors: vanilla, chocolate, buttercream raisin...! Lots of folks in Hollywood would sometimes show off their cookies to get other people to watch their shows! People loved it. So they started making movies where people traded cookies and ate them even though they weren't friends at all, but were just pretending! All the while the King kept telling everyone to use their magic cookie only in the right way so they could experience the real magic.

◆But the more people didn't, the less magic there was in that country. And people who always thought they'd stay BFFs broke up. That meant that families would break up. Kid's didn't know who to call dad and mom anymore. And people hated other people for taking bites out of their BFFs cookie. Things just fell apart in the land of Krumble.

◆**Background:** This my friends is an allegory of Leviticus 18. The land they Israelites were leaving, Egypt, and the land they were

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heading to, Canaan, were like Krumble. (cf v3, 27 but we know it from their own records as well.)

◆ In Egypt, the pharaohs were considered gods and typically married incestuously (within the “divine” lineage), so that, for example, King Tutankhamun (1341–1323 b.c.) was the son of Pharaoh Akhenaten and one of Akhenaten’s younger sisters and, in turn, married his own half-sister Ankhesenamun, herself the daughter of Akhenaten. In contrast Israelite law forbade such practice. No, your lineage doesn’t give you special privilege.

◆ The Canaanites included sexual activity within the ritual worship of their gods and in their myths spoke of their gods engaged in incest, extra-marital sexuality, and bestiality. Hittite laws went so far as to affirm which animals were legal to “feed cookies to” and which were not. In contrast, Israelite law forbade all such activity.

◆ Our question in this startling text is of course, “What is God telling us here?” While a great many practices are address here lets start with the over all theme.

◆ **1. Do not deify your desires.** That is, don’t make you desires your God. Don’t let your desire be what you serve.

◆ *“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?” Romans 6:16, NIV.*

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◆ People have always fought with the sin of making their own desires into their god. The nature of sin itself is to decide to be god unto myself, or to turn away from the one true God. Teach it to your heart right now: your desires are not your God. They are not the measure of right and wrong, good or bad. And yet, this has become the American way.

◆ A. Strong feelings are not an excuse for deifying my desires.

The question here is how do you decide how to live? What to do? How to be? The Bible consistently says we decide according to what's true and right. We call that morality, which is an impossible idea at all without the reality of a greater power that has determined it. *If you don't recognize God, you have no reason ever to venture an opinion about something being right or wrong.* All you can say is what you want to be true or right with no basis but your desire. All the world is left with is rule of the powerful who can make their wants temporary law.

◆ [Aside: What we have in Leviticus 18 is all moral law.

Some folks claim that since ceremonial laws are done away with according to Jesus and the New Testament, so these laws are to be thrown out as well. Lets not be foolish. 1) While ceremonial laws were clearly ended in the New Testament because Jesus fulfilled them, 2) Moral law doesn't change. 3) All the teaching of Leviticus 18 is *repeated* in the New Testament. Incest, adultery, homosexual activity. Jesus

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even intensifies these to our very "thoughts". (Rom.1, Matt19, Matt5) Jesus said

◆"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." Matthew 5:17, 18, NIV.]

◆If we were to summarize Leviticus 18 it would amount to God has designed sexual relations exclusively for the marriage of one man to one woman. There is really no other place for it at all. It doesn't really matter how much you or I may want something else. We don't determine right and wrong. How do we know what God determined?

◆"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27, NIV.

◆"*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*" Genesis 2:24, NIV.

◆B. Now sexual desire, being perhaps the strongest of physical and emotional human desires is not such that we only have it in a marriage. Lots of unmarried people feel it. Lots of married people feel it in situations *outside* their marriage. Lots of people feel it in many confused ways. People are not really monogamous by nature; however marriages are, and according to God's Word, that's the only right place for sexual relations.

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◆ God spells it out for Moses and Israel in chapter 18. Probably because he knows how we are. We're going to look for a loop hole, right?

◆ *"What if we both love each other? How about if we're going to get married someday? What if we're both consenting, doesn't that make it legit? What if I really like cookies? What if I was born with unnatural cookie desire, isn't it who I am? Shouldn't I be allowed to be who I am?" (v22 answers this). What if she's not technically my neighbors wife but lives a whole mile away? (v20).*

◆ Basically we are asking "Can't I sin if I really want to?" Simple answer: **Yes**, you can! But you will not find abundant life (v5). You and I are fallen sinful people. All humans everywhere are. And sin was not God's design. Everyone in the room fights the same thing in various ways. What IS allowed is for us to follow God's design, not ours. So no, we may not, no matter how much we want to, no matter how long you've fought it and now don't want to anymore, make our desires our god.

◆ So no, fathers may not force their daughters or granddaughters to sleep with them (v17). Brothers may not abuse their sisters (v9). Uncles may not prey on their nieces. And no, it is not OK or even healthy for you, or for society, to watch other people do these things. (You may have noticed how protective God is in Leviticus of women and children. Much more in comparison to the Code of

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Hammurabi or the Hittite Laws. These laws keep perpetrators from forcibly taking advantage of minors, women, and dependents. God here is preserving the holiness of the home.)

◆**C.** Here's another angle on it. Popularity is not an excuse for deifying my desires. Lets revisit v3. The Egyptian culture did all these evil things. The Canaanite culture did all these evil things. It is not new. Bestiality, homosexuality, adultery, casual cookie trading -human society has always had it. Some folks assume then that it's just the way it is. No, it's just the way it isn't. Now it's no secret that the LGBTQ community has a lot of political presence, and attention of the media today. Whole denominations of Christians are splitting over the popularity of allowing these practices as acceptable. This is not an issue hidden on the back pages. Students in our high schools and even in our Kindergarten curriculum are being encouraged to chose their gender based on desire which All science clearly argues against. But it's popular.

◆It was popular in 1300 BC too. Killing your child for the sake of your own advantage was popular too, (v21) Molech was a Ammonite god. How badly must one want something to kill their child to have it? It's been highly popular in our country since 1973 under the popular slogan of "choice". What is that if not making desire our god? This text is a warning to the Church of God in it's attitude toward embracing what is popular. "That's the

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way they do it today” people say. That doesn’t make it right or good for us.

◆I have good news for all of us, brothers and sisters caught in the life of battling our own wants, and creating our own gods. There is a way to heal! There is a healer who loves us anyway!

◆**2. To find true life, ask the true God.** What is the constant refrain in the book of Leviticus? Even if you don’t remember all the stipulations you’ve read, I’ll bet anyone who’s read it can complete this constantly repeated phrase: “I am...(the Lord, your God.)” (18:3,30; 13x in chap.19. 18-20 are a section of their own, especially clear in the Hebrew.)

◆God’s laws are always given for our good. v5 This verse does not mean you can earn salvation by keeping the law, even if you could keep it. It means that real life is found in following the path of God. Jesus said “seek first the Kingdom and all these things will be added...” Moses wrote,

◆*“Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you--they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.” Deuteronomy 32:46, 47, NIV.*

◆Science backs up the Word all the time. There are reams of material for example that show children are developmentally healthier when raised in a stable home with a married dad and mom. There is no data that shows that sexual abuse improves



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society. So here's the good news. If you are or have struggled with sexual addictions or malpractice you can seek healing. God can forgive you! Jesus went to Jerusalem to secure that! God can restore you, and even change your desires into holy ones. He can counter brokenness and consequences that always accompany sin and evil. You can chose to pursue him! There are many followers of God who would love to help you. Do you want his better way? Will you put him on the throne of your life?

◆**Conclusion:** Today is Palm Sunday. If you've joined us for the first time today, it surely strikes you as odd that we studying this piece of God's holy word today. (What you probably don't realize is that we've been looking at the codes for holiness in Leviticus for the whole season of Lent because they call us to the one saving factor for sin: repentance. Its why many Christians chose to give up something for the season; it reminds us that we need to give up sin, that sin requires sacrifice, and that God sent his only Son to be that sacrifice humankind could not afford.

◆It's actually quite similar to the situation in Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday. The Israelites put their desire on the throne. They wanted a warrior Messiah. They spread palms for Jesus for a completely wrong reason, though Jesus was in fact their Messiah. Within the week they will have killed him on a cross! Ah but Easter was coming!

◆Everyone of us has desires that we have put in the place of God. Everyone of us struggles against sin and the devil. And everyone

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of us that accept the forgiving grace of God through Jesus will win! His holiness will start making you holy.